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Memorandum to
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DOD STRATEGIC TARGETING STUDY BRIEFING

Thursday, July 27, 1972

Johnny Foster is set to brief you Thursday, July 27, on the DOD Strategic Target Policy study. The study was prepared on a very close-hold basis. Without Laird's approval, I was given a summary so the fact that we have advance material should not be revealed.

Background

The SIOP is based on and driven by the National Strategic Target Attack Policy (NSTAP), a document given to SAC by the JCS. It does not relate to Administration guidance (i.e., NSDM 16) which essentially deals with weapon acquisition, not weapons use. The current NSTAP has changed little from the original policy paper prepared by McNamara's staff in the early 1960s, although the strategic situation has changed radically.

The NSTAP objectives are threefold:

- To destroy the Soviet and PRC nuclear offensive capability (SIOP Task Alpha).
- To destroy the Soviet and PRC military target system (SIOP Task Bravo).
- To cause heavy damage to the enemy's military supporting industrial base and its urban-industrial (U/I) centers (SIOP Task Charlie).

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under provisions of E.O. 12958
by R. Souers, National Security Council

The shortcomings of this policy are obvious. Its only objective is to win the nuclear war by destroying the enemy. There is no effort to control escalation or plan for limited options. Moreover, no consideration is given to the great uncertainty that exists as to how a war might begin -- the assumption is that one side or the other launches a major attack, perhaps the least likely scenario.

A small Committee chaired by Johnny Foster (DDR&E) then prepared a new draft policy paper (nuclear target attack policy -- NTAP), which is essentially the study you will be briefed on.

OSD Draft Targeting and Attack Policy

The new policy paper is radical departure from the current policy -- in substance as well as format. In essence, the difference is that the current policy is to win the war through destruction of the enemy's forces and military capability. The new, proposed policy aims at trying to stop the war quickly and at a low level of destruction. It also deals with all offensive nuclear weapons -- tactical and theater as well as strategic weapons.

The first major objective of the new policy is to control escalation. This is done several ways:

-- Establishing boundaries, e.g., types of weapons, type targets, and launch location.

-- Deterring enemy escalation by ensuring we retain a highly survivable U/I capability.

-- Avoiding instability "use or lose" pressures by tailoring targeting tasks to the appropriate type of weapon (e.g., bombers should not be used for the U/I reserve since they are not survivable).

-- Avoiding destruction of the enemy's key national command-control facilities to ensure he can control escalation and not resort to "automatic" responses.

The second major element is policy for the situation where efforts to prevent escalation fail. In this case, our forces would be used to

minimize the enemy's residual military power and recovery capability and not just destroy his population and industry.

Weapons Allocation Priorities

The draft NTAP also prescribes the priorities to be followed by the target planners in allocating weapons for targets.

Under the new proposal there would be a sharp distinction between weapons priorities for the options based on normal, day-to-day alert (essentially retaliatory options) and a generated alert option (essentially a pre-emptive strike). The table below compares the weapon assignment priorities for the current policy with the proposed policy.

Weapons Assignment Priorities

Priority	Current Policy Retaliatory or Pre-emption	New Policy	
		Retaliatory	Pre-emption
1	Strategic nuclear targets	U/I	U/I
2	U/I targets	Command/ Control	Nuclear forces including hard silos
3	General purpose forces	Residual nuclear and GP forces	Command/ Control
4	N/A	Hard silos	GPF targets

This is not the order in which targets would be struck but the priorities followed in allocating weapons to the target array. For example, the U/I targets would get first call on weapons. Thus, those weapons (probably SLBMs) that have "enduring survivability" would be allocated to the U/I mission. Should we pre-empt, this does not mean we would go after the U/I targets first -- rather, we would likely go after Soviet nuclear threats to us and our allies, withholding survivable U/I capability to deter the Soviets from hitting our U/I targets.

Attack Options

Recognizing the uncertainty over how a nuclear conflict might start, the new policy prescribes a wide range of options which fall into three basic classes.

1. Major Attacks -- These are the large war-attacks along the line of the current SIOP. There are four options: (1) major Soviet and East European GPF and nuclear military forces; (2) the first option plus U/I, political and economic targets; (3) and (4) the same two options but for the PRC rather than the USSR.

2. Selected Attack Options -- There are 12 such options designed to control escalation. The selected attacks are smaller packages of the targets in the major options. Coupling these selected packages with various withholdings should provide boundaries to discourage escalation. The withholdings include targets collocated with major urban areas, targets in any specific country, Moscow and Peking, etc., and can be applied to the major options as well. In all cases, a reserve to carry out the U/I task would be maintained, using survivable forces to discourage the enemy from a major attack or attack on our cities.

Among the selected attack options are strikes against:

- (1) Soviet nuclear threat to the U.S.
- (2) The threat to NATO.
- (3) War at sea targets.
- (4) Threats to our allies in Asia.
- (5) Soviet air defenses.
- (6) PRC nuclear threats.
- (7) PRC command/control and conventional forces.

3. Limited Options -- Obviously, a wide range of limited options would be possible drawing selected parts of the above options. To facilitate use of limited options a special planning staff would be established to develop preplanned options and design ad hoc options as required in a crisis.

The Next Steps

The JCS are now reviewing the new target policy. After their comments are received the paper will be revised and submitted for Presidential approval (you should make sure of this). When the final policy is issued, SAC will then begin redoing the SIOP. This will be a long process -- probably a year or more.

Obviously, much more work will be needed to implement the policy if it is adopted. For example:

-- This work needs to be integrated into the Strategic Objectives Study and the study completed and brought to the NSC for decision.

-- We must determine what changes we will want to make in our declaratory policy and explain the new policy to NATO (the allies are likely to have serious concerns about it).

Areas You Should Probe

I suggest that you raise questions in the following areas:

-- When will the policy be submitted to the President for approval?

-- How do the limited options support our strategic objectives?

-- How does this targeting policy relate to our weapons acquisition policy? to SALT?

-- Since we need to get the NSTAP worked into the Strategic Objectives Study, how can we best proceed? (Foster probably will not know and I suspect Laird is trying to derail the study.)